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# Ex-C.I.A. Chief Doubts Soviet Powder Report

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Aug. 23 — Stansfield Turner, the Director of Central Intelligence from 1977 to 1981, today questioned the Reagan Administration assertion that the Soviet Union began in 1976 to track American diplomats' movements with a potentially harmful powder.

Mr. Turner said in an interview that he had never been told of the use of the powder in his years as director. He said in an interview that the Reagan Administration had overstated the number of years the powder had been in use because it was "embarrassed" that it had not acted sooner.

"I think this Administration is being defensive, since they've known about it since 1982 and they didn't do anything until now," he said.

A State Department official said it was plausible that Mr. Turner had not been told of the matter because the technique had not been frequently used. He said the chemical had been detected in and around the American diplomatic buildings and workers fewer than 10 times from 1976 to 1982.

The official said that in the last four months its widespread use has been detected in both Leningrad and Moscow.

## 'Sporadic and Minuscule'

"Mr. Turner may well have not been aware of its usage, since it was so sporadic and minuscule," he said. "We found it in a lot of places simultaneously beginning this spring."

The official would not specify how many instances had been detected but said it was "orders of magnitude more" than the purported usage from 1976 to 1982.

The United States said Wednesday that it had sent a strong note of protest to the Soviet Union over the chemical, which is called nitrophenylpentadiene, or NPPD. American officials said the substance was a mutagen, a substance that could cause genetic change, and that it therefore might have the potential to cause cancer.

On Thursday, Tass, the Soviet press agency, called the charges "absurd" and a "gross falsehood."

Intelligence officials said such a chemical could be used to keep track of meetings between American officials and Soviet dissidents or others.

Mr. Turner said it was difficult to believe that he would not have been told about the powder.

"If they had known about this at the C.I.A. and didn't tell me, I would be very surprised," he said. "I believe we didn't have any evidence that this was going on in Moscow."

Mr. Turner dismissed suggestions that intelligence officials would have been prepared to overlook a technique that might have been only occasionally used against the embassy.

Malcolm Toon, the United States Ambassador to the Soviet Union from 1976 to 1979, said Thursday that he had not been told about the chemical.

## Soviet Assails U.S.

Special to The New York Times

MOSCOW, Aug. 23 — The Government newspaper Izvestia today assailed Washington's charges that a potentially harmful tracking agent was being used by the K.G.B.

Under the headline "Dirty and Stupid Provocation," Izvestia said the chemical was in common domestic use, although the article did not name the agent or its uses.

It charged that the accusations made by Washington had been concocted by the Central Intelligence Agency, seeking to cover its own failures and "dirty deeds" in Moscow, and listed the names of diplomats who had been expelled or publicly accused of spying in the press in the past several years.

Izvestia said the State Department had issued a "sensational announcement, fashioned in the genre of science fiction, obviously intended to arouse the public's imagination."